

Dr. Ambedkar with the Simon Commission

STATEMENT "D"
EVIDENCE OF Dr. AMBEDKAR BEFORE THE INDIAN STATUTORY
COMMISSION ON 23rd OCTOBER 1928

INDIAN STATUTORY COMMISSION, POONA

Dated 23rd October 1928

PRESENT

*ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION, OF THE CENTRAL
COMMITTEE (EXCEPT RAJA NAWAB ALI KHAN) AND OF THE BOMBAY
PROVINCIAL COMMITTEE*

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (a member of the Bombay Committee) and Dr. P. G. Solanki (representing the Depressed Classes), called and examined.

Chairman : Just to remind my colleagues, the documents we should have before us are : Dr. Ambedkar's Statement on behalf of the Depressed Classes' Institute of Bombay and the Joint Memorandum of the Depressed Indian Association, Bombay, and the Servants of Somavamshi Society. Dr. Ambedkar has changed his seat, because he is acting for the moment as one of our witnesses. Dr. Ambedkar, of course, we know as a member of the Bombay Committee. I think. Dr. Solanki, you or your Association is responsible for the other document ?

Dr. Solanki : I concur in the document submitted by Dr. Ambedkar. 2. I should like you to begin. Dr. Ambedkar, by helping us as to the sort of number of depressed classes in this Presidency. Can you help us about that?

Dr. Ambedkar : I find that the depressed class population, as computed in the Memorandum submitted by the Government of Bombay is estimated at 1,478,390 as may be seen from page 3 of their Memorandum (Vol. VII).

3. Let us see. They say, "The depressed classes, which include mostly the Dheds, Mangs, Mahars and Holiyas, number, according to the Census of 1921, 1,478,390 approximately." What do you say about that figure ?

Dr. Ambedkar : As you will see, the figure I have given on page 39 of my Memorandum is about 28 lakhs.

4. You think the number should be about 2,800,000 ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

5. How does the discrepancy arise ?

Dr. Ambedkar : The first thing I should like to say is this, that the figures given by the Government of Bombay are taken, I believe, from the Census of India, 1921, Vol. 8, Bombay Presidency, Part II, the tables starting on page 176, while the figures which I give in my memorandum are from Chapter II of Vol. I of the Census of India, 1921. These are the figures estimated by the Director of Census, who has collected the figures of the different Provinces, and his computations, which I have taken bodily, are given on page 39 of my memorandum under the heading " Population of the Depressed Classes in India ", and show the figures for the different Provinces, giving the population of the depressed classes in each. Now, as we see, there is this discrepancy between the two sets of figures. These figures of course, can never be exact, neither the Provincial nor the Central figures. In fact, if the Conference will refer to the remarks of the Director of the Census of India, which I commence quoting on page 39 of my memorandum, it will be seen that, after giving the total estimated population of the depressed classes he goes on to say (page 39 of memorandum, in italics), " This, however, must be taken as a low and conservative estimate since it does not include (1) the full strength of the castes and tribes concerned, and (2) the tribal aborigines most recently absorbed in Hinduism, many of whom are considered impure. We may confidently place the numbers of the depressed classes, all of whom are considered impure, at something between 55 and 60 millions in India proper." Then he gives the figures for each province.

6. Would you mind if I just try to clear my own mind, not by reference to precise figures, but by contrasting two conceptions ? It is manifest that if some authorities, speaking with the precision of Census returns, give a total like 1,478,000, and other authorities, also speaking with precision, give a figure like 2,800,000, the second authorities must be including people not included by the first ?

Dr. Ambedkar : That is so, and I should, therefore, like to point out to the Conference that the provincial figures do not include certain castes which are, as a matter of fact, untouchable castes.

7. May we put it like this ? See if I have it correct, and if I have not please tell me. I have been studying it as well as I can, although I have been looking forward to your help and that of Dr. Solanki. In one sense of the term, by " Depressed Classes " you might mean untouchables in the sense of persons who are Hindus, but who are denied access to the Hindu temples, might you not ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

8. In another sense you might include in the " Depressed Classes " not

only those people whom I have described, but also the criminal tribes, the hill tribes and other people who no doubt are very low in the scale, but who are not, perhaps, in the narrower sense untouchables from the point of view of the Hindus hierarchy ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Quite.

9. Is not that a possible view ?

Dr. Ambedkar : That is a possible view.

10. Is not that the real explanation of why in some connections you get a certain figure for the depressed classes, meaning untouchables, persons who are refused admission to the Hindu temples, whereas on the other hand you sometimes get a bigger figure which would include these criminal and hill tribes?

Dr. Ambedkar : I do not think that is so in this case, because the figures I have given seem to have reference to the depressed classes as distinct from the hill tribes and the criminal tribes.

11. Let me point this out to you. I have before me these three figures. I have got a figure of 1,478,000 odd for untouchables taken from the Census of 1921, and made up of these Mahars, Dheds and other people. Then I have a long list of criminal tribes and so on, which adds up to 589,000—just over half a million. Then I have a third list of aboriginals and hill tribes- Bhils, and people of that sort—and they add up to another million. If you were to add the aboriginal and criminal tribes in with the first figure, you would get a total approximately like the larger figure you give of 2,800,000 ?

Dr. Ambedkar : The quotation I reproduce on page 39 of my memorandum from the remarks of the Directors of the Census gives me the impression that his figures are strictly for the depressed classes. My feeling is that the figures computed by the Director of the Census and referred to by him in the paragraph which I quote on page 39 of my memorandum are figures which apply only to the depressed classes.

12. I see that the Director of the Census of India for 1921 says this : " It has been usual in recent years to speak of a certain section of the community as the ' Depressed Classes '—so far as I am aware the term has no final definition, nor is it certain exactly whom it covers." Then he refers to some educational criticisms. That is the passage you mean ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes, and " The total population classed according to these lists as depressed amounted to 31 million persons or 19 per cent. of the Hindu and tribal population of British India." That remark would appear to exclude the tribal people from the depressed classes.

13. I do not know. Anyhow, that is one possible explanation, and I think you agree a possible explanation is that the smaller figure is the figure of

untouchables in the sense I have tried to define. I think you agree that is a possible view. It is manifest that for many purposes those interested in trying to promote the advancement and elevation of those who are most depressed may very well include in their survey a wider number of persons, including the criminal and hill tribes. That is a possibility ?

Dr. Ambedkar : It is a possibility.

14. I should like to suggest to you another possible view. I do not know if it qualifies it. On page 39 of your document you point out, quite accurately, I think, that if you add the provincial figures together you get something like 55 to 60 millions in India proper ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

15. "India proper " there, I think, would include the Indian States?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes, I thought of that, but I would point out one thing. He seems to exclude the Indian States, because he gives a separate figure for Baroda.

16. Perhaps he mentions one or two of the larger ones ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Probably. Qualification of the figures.

17. We do not, of course, want to spend too long on the statistical point, because, after all, whether the right figure to take is 1 1/2 million or 2 millions or 2 1/2 millions, it is obvious, it is a very large number of people, and they are people who deserve our very special consideration ?

Dr. Ambedkar : One point I wish to mention is this, that the figures from which the provincial figures are computed are in the table which deals only with the principal Indian castes. It is not an exhaustive table, and I find by going over the different castes which are mentioned in this table that it does not give any figures whatsoever for ten castes, which are undoubtedly castes. They are not included in the principal Indian castes.

18. What I was going to suggest, if it was agreeable to you both, was this. You have called attention to the main considerations with regard to the figures and, without fixing absolutely the right figures, I think it would be well to get rid of this figures point as quickly as possible and then we can get to the question of considering the position and treatment of these classes ; otherwise we may occupy a long time on arithmetic. I have asked what I want to put about it, and I am quite prepared to take it that if you apply a narrower test you may get a figure of 1 1/2 millions, but that with a wider test you will get a figure of between 2 and 3 millions. I accept that from you, as I follow it ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, with this qualification, that the Bombay figures do not include ten of the castes.

Chairman : We want to get to the real point, which is their representation.

Is there anyone who wants to occupy time on this statistical point ? Are you content, Mr. Rajah, that we should take it the figures are something of that sort?

Rao Bahadur Rajah : Which figures ?

Chairman : Do not you think we might proceed with the really important question, which is their representation, leaving it like this that in the Bombay Presidency the Census of 1921 gives a figure of 11/2 millions, but it would appear that those are the depressed classes in the narrower sense I have mentioned, the untouchables from the point of view of religion, but that, as Dr. Ambedkar has pointed out, the official figures really show, if you take a rather wider but perfectly legitimate view, that the true figure may be between 2 and 3 millions. Is not that fair ?

Rao Bahadar Rajah: Yes, that is right.

Chairman : Does anybody want to add anything about that ? 19.

Colonel Lane Fox : On which figure are the two memoranda which we have received based ? In each memorandum you ask for special representation for the depressed classes. You ask for adult suffrage in one memorandum, and you ask for special recruitment for the army and navy and so on. It is obvious it is a bigger thing if you ask for it for the aborigines and criminal tribes and so on. Are these privileges asked for the bigger figure or for the smaller ?

Dr. Ambedkar : I ask for them for the depressed classes.

20. For the aborigines and criminal classes also ?

Dr. Ambedkar : No. I do not think it would be possible to allow them the privilege of adult suffrage.

21. But you quote the bigger figure ?

Dr. Ambedkar : I am not accepting altogether the fact that the figure which I have given in my memorandum covers the aborigines and the hill tribes. I still hold to the view that on a fair computation the figure I have given is largely the figure for the depressed classes. I admit only the possibility of the other view.

Chairman : There is only one thing I might add. Sir Arthur Froom may be able to confirm it. I notice the Muddiman Committee (Reforms Enquiry Committee, 1925) in the table subjoined to para. 64 of their Report, give the figure at 2,800,000.

22. *Sir Hari Singh Gour* : Dr. Ambedkar, would you regard " depressed classes " and " untouchables " as synonymous terms ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

23. In asking for special representation for the depressed classes you confine yourselves to the untouchables ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

24. You say that some aborigines are not untouchables ?

Dr. Ambedkar : In some parts they may be. I do not propose to speak on their behalf.

25. They are not untouchables. The criminal tribes are not untouchables ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Some of them are.

26. Some, but as a tribe they are not ?

Dr. Ambedkar : The criminal tribes have so little social intercourse with the rest of the Hindus that there is no basis for any definite opinion on that point, but if they did have such intercourse I think they would be retarded as untouchables.

27. There are certain classes which stand midway between touchability and untouchability ?

Dr. Ambedkar : I would rather say they were lower down than (be untouchables).

28. No, higher up in the social ladder there is a class which is semi untouchable?

Dr. Ambedkar : I cannot say. My point is this, that with respect to the criminal tribes we have no data for forming an opinion as to whether they are untouchable or not, because there is very little intercourse between the main body of Hindus and the criminal tribes.

29. Leave out of account the criminal tribes and aborigines; I am now dealing with the untouchables. Among the untouchables themselves there are degrees; there are certain among them who may be regarded as only semi untouchable?

Dr. Ambedkar : (Both witnesses) No.

30. I will give you an example. What is the position of the Chambhar ?

Dr. Ambedkar : He is entirely untouchable.

31. As much as the Mahar ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

32. Are you certain of that ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes, if you apply this test of common water, or of entering a temple.

33. No, by untouchability I mean whose touch will pollute a high caste Hindu ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Well, you can take entering a temple or taking water as a test.

Chairman: After all, we are engaged here primarily in a constitutional and political inquiry. Social customs and deep-rooted religious traditions are not things which are likely to be removed between night and morning by any

commission; that is obvious enough. It really comes to this, that in one sense the depressed classes meaning the untouchables, will be those classes who are denied all access to Hindu temples, and who, it is suggested, are deprived very often of the use of schools, of dharmashalas and things of that sort. In addition to those, speaking politically and constitutionally, we shall all agree there are others, not very advanced in the scale of civilisation, such as Sir Hari Singh Gour has referred to—criminal tribes, hill tribes and so on—who are also inhabitants of India and as such demand our attention.

Sir Hari Singh Gour: The Hindus are divided into four castes. The Shudras cannot get into the temples.....

Chairman: I think we all appreciate that. However, we are not engaged in making laws for the Hindu religion, but in considering the structure of the constitution of British India, which is a very different thing.

34. Taking that figure, what is it that you want to represent as the proper way in which the constitution of India, and more particularly the constitution of the Bombay Presidency, should deal with these people ?

Dr. Ambedkar : The first thing I would like to submit is that we claim that we must be treated as a distinct minority, separate from the Hindu community. Our minority character has been hitherto concealed by our inclusion in the Hindu community, but as a matter of fact there is really no link between the depressed classes and the Hindu community. The first point, therefore, I would stress before the Conference is that we must be regarded as a distinct and independent minority. Secondly, I should like to submit that the depressed classes minority needs far greater political protection than any other minority in British India, for the simple reason that it is educationally very backward, that it is economically poor, socially enslaved, and suffers from certain grave political disabilities, from which no other community suffers. Then I would submit that, as a matter of demand for our political protection, we claim representation on the same basis as the Mohammedan minority. We claim reserved seats if accompanied by adult franchise.

35. And if there is no adult franchise ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Then we would ask for separate electorates. Further, we would like to have certain safeguards either in the constitution, if it is possible, or else in the way of advice in the instrument to the Governor regarding the education of the depressed classes and their entry into the public services.

36. May we just ask Dr. Solanki if he agrees in those points ?

Dr. Solanki: I agree with all the points.

37. Then we may take it that that is the view of both you gentlemen ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

38. Would it be convenient if I asked a question of two on these points as we go? You claim that the depressed class, although included within Hinduism in a sense, should none the less be regarded from the point of view of the constitution as a distinct and separate community from others who are within Hinduism ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

39. Is that on the ground that in your view the depressed classes cannot expect to have their interests satisfactorily represented by the higher ranks of Hinduism ?

Dr. Ambedkar: That is one ground, but a matter of fact, really we cannot be deemed to be part of the Hindu community.

40. You come, I believe from an earlier set of inhabitants of this continent?

Dr. Ambedkar : That is one view, I think.

41. It is supposed—we will not go into details—that you are pre-Aryan ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Well, I do not know. That is a view.

43. I only ask you the question because there are some very distinguished Hindu public men —I do not mention any names — who have undoubtedly exhibited a good deal of interest in the case of the depressed classes. There is no question about that ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes, there is a great deal of public talk. 44. I know ; but, at any rate, that is your view : You say you must be regarded as a distinct and separate community from the constitutional point of view ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

45. As regards representation, I notice that whether there is adult franchise, or whether there is not adult franchise, you seem to be abandoning any idea of nomination, you want election ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

46. Is that the view of both of you ?

Dr. Solanki: Yes.

47. That means, of course, that you have to make a list of voters ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

48. And you have to make sure that the man who comes to vote is the man on the list, and nobody else?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

49. Could you give me an estimate at all, Dr. Ambedkar, of what percentage of the population whom you call the depressed classes can read?

Dr. Ambedkar : In a separate memorandum which I have submitted to the Commission on education in the Bombay Presidency I gave the figures.

50. I am afraid it is a very small proportion ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Quite.

51. After all, one of the complaints that are made is that they have not had as free access to schools as more fortunate people ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Quite so.

52. So it would mean, would it not, if it was done by election, that it would almost entirely have to be done by people voting who could not themselves understand the ballot paper ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes. That is true of the majority of voters even today.

53. True. Now, would you tell me how many reserved seats in the Bombay Presidency you would suggest classes ?

Dr. Ambedkar : In the scheme that I have prepared I say out of 140 we claim 22 seats.

54. What you suggest is that if the total number of members of the Bombay Council, all elected, was 140, then you think that the body for which you wish to speak should have 22 elective seats ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

55. And supposing, to take your other alternative, there is no adult franchise, then you are asking for separate electorates. Do you still want 22 seats ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

56. The only other thing I will ask you is this. I think Mr. Rajah probably will be glad to put a few questions himself to bring out the social condition. At present I think, in the Bombay Legislative Council there are two members, are there not, who are nominated to represent the depressed classes ?

Dr. Ambedkar : That is so.

57. You yourself being one of them ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

58. And Dr. Solanki being the other ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

59. Was that based on the Southborough Committee's Report ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes, I believe so.

60. I believe you gave evidence before the Southborough Committee ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

61. I have been reading your evidence before that Committee, and I was looking to see how many members you said there were of the depressed classes. I think you point out in your memorandum, in a note at the bottom of page 39, that the figure of the depressed classes given by the

Southborough Committee for the Bombay Presidency was 5,77,000 ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

62. I think your view is that, that was an error ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes, a very large error.

63. Can you tell me, as a matter of fact, how they arrived at it ? Do you know at all ?

Dr. Ambedkar : They simply took, I think, a small table with regard to castes which cause pollution.

64. It was taking a still narrower definition of what constituted the depressed classes ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

65. *Mr. Hartshorn*: I notice in this note you say, after referring to the figure of the Southborough Committee of 5,77,000. " According to the authority relied upon by the Southborough Committee, the population of the depressed classes in the Bombay Presidency in 1911 was 2,145,000".

Dr. Ambedkar : In the Census.

66. That is the authority they relied upon ? That was what I wanted to know.

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes. The authority gave two different figures on two different pages, if I remember correctly. On one page they gave the smaller figure, and they took that up, and as soon as the Report of the Southborough Committee was published we protested against this estimate to the Government of Bombay.

67. *Chairman*: I think it is quite clear what the 2,100,000 was. It was the result of adding together in the Census of 1921 the figure given for the untouchables, which as I have said, was 1,478,000, and the figure given for the criminal tribes, which was something like 623,000. Adding those two together, you would get the 2,100,000 ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

68. And it was leaving out the aboriginal and hill tribes. It must have been?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

69. *Mr. Miller* : I should like to ask about the position in some of the Indian States. In Baroda and one other State, I think, where some special facilities are shown, are those special facilities anything beyond education facilities ?

Dr. Ambedkar : No, nothing beyond that.

70. Could you obtain service with the State ?

Dr. Ambedkar : I should think it would be very difficult.

71. You are particularly anxious to get appointments in the public service ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes, decidedly.

72. Why is that so ?

Dr. Ambedkar : On that point I should like to say this, that our experience so far as the administration of the law is concerned is very bitter. I wish to say most emphatically that in many cases the law is administered to the disadvantage of the depressed class man. I would like to give a concrete case of what actually happened in one of the districts, without, of course, mentioning names. The Bombay Government annually lets out its forest lands for cultivation to the villages on certain stated terms. Now we discovered that in the allotment of those forest lands the depressed class man, who was often a landless labourer or with very little land, and who was clamouring for some sort of economic stability, never came in for a share. The Mamlatdars, who were really in charge of distributing the lands, showed absolute favouritism to the caste Hindu as against the depressed class man. Last year in one district we organised and sent a deputation to the Assistant Deputy Collector of that district, placing before him our grievances with respect to these forest lands. He issued a circular to the Mamlatdars saying that the applications from the depressed classes should be considered. Now, some of the Mamlatdars, to show they were acting up to the circular, did give some lands to the depressed classes. But we found that they rather fooled us, if I may say so. What they did was, on paper they allotted a very large amount of land to the depressed classes and a very small amount of land to the caste Hindus, but when we came to see actually what was allotted to us we found that the land allotted to the depressed classes was all rocky and unfit for cultivation and the depressed class people would not take it for anything, and the land allotted to the caste Hindus though small, was all rich and fertile. Now I think that is a most fragrant abuse of the administrative power which is entrusted to the officials, and I personally attach far more importance to good administration of law than to more efficient administration of law.

73. *Chairman*: I imagine that the application of what you have told us, which is interesting, to our present inquiry is really this — because, of course, it is no part of the function of this Commission to interfere in day-by-day administration?

Dr. Ambedkar : No.

74. You are using it as an argument to support your view that the depressed classes should have a full representation ?

Dr. Ambedkar : In the services.

75. That is your point ?

Dr. Ambedkar: That is my point. I will give some instances of what happens in judicial courts actually in this Presidency. I happened to defend a depressed class man in one of the courts, and, to my great surprise, I

found that the man had to stand outside the court behind a little window, outside the wall, and he would not come in simply because, he said, " It is all right so far as you are concerned, but after you have left there will be terrible social ostracism if I enter the court."

76. It was the client who did not want to come in ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Who dare not come in.

77. What sort of social ostracism had he in mind ?

Dr. Ambedkar : The social ostracism would be that if he went back to the village there would be the boycott of the shop-keepers; nobody would sell him grain. The villagers would stop his dues as a village servant. He would not be allowed to come into the village. The depressed class people always live on the border of the village, not in the centre or in the midst.

78. Your point would be that he was timid about coming into court on this occasion because he thought that afterwards the other people of the village, not his own lot but the others, the caste people, would regard him as having pushed himself in where he should not go ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Certainly—having exceeded the bounds of his social status.

79. That is a single case, is it ?

Dr. Ambedkar : I have had that experience but I think that the existence of a circular of the Bombay High Court to the effect that the depressed classes must be allowed entry in the courts indicates that that is often the case. There must be some reason for that circular.

80. *Mr. Miller*: The only other question, I want to ask is this. If you got these 22 seats in the Council do you think you could bring forward 22 suitable men ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes, I think so.

81. *Khan Sahib Abdul Latif* : Would you please enlighten the members of the Conference as to the fate of the minorities in the Bombay Council, when the official bloc is withdrawn for certain reasons ?

Dr. Ambedkar : I quite see that the fate of the minorities would be precarious. It has been precarious.

82. Did the honourable Minister belonging to the advanced class show any consideration to the project, or the feelings of Mohammedans, non-Brahmins, or depressed classes ?

Dr. Ambedkar : No, not at all.

83. Do the minor communities stand any chance of getting through any legislation in the Bombay Legislative Council, or get any chance to move it?

Dr. Ambedkar : Their chances would be almost nil.

98. *Sardar Mujumdar*: Is it not a fact that different kinds of castes among the depressed classes are known as the depressed classes; that is to say, there are different kinds of castes even among the depressed classes ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes, of course.

99. Can you give me approximately the number of those castes ?

Dr. Ambedkar : I think you will find them in the Census, the different castes enumerated as untouchables.

100. Can you give me any idea of the number of different castes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: About a dozen or so. The Census gives it.

101. How many castes are included in the depressed classes in Bombay ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Almost all the castes.

102. Then the members of the different castes are members of your organisation ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Quite ; it is a general body inclusive of all the depressed classes.

103. So that among the depressed classes are included all those ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

104. Have you taken into consideration the claims of the Bhils and Wadias and other persons ?

Dr. Ambedkar : No.

105. What do you say about the protection of those minorities ?

Dr. Ambedkar : I think that they also should be allowed some protection by representation.

106. Do you not think that even among the backward classes there are certain communities, who are in a minority ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes.

106A. Then has the present constitution any provision to protect their interest?

Chairman: Are these castes to which you refer refused admission to the Hindu temples ?

Sardar Mujumdar: No, they are allowed to go into them. *Chairman*: This morning we are really considering the case of untouchables, and persons who are quite outside the Hindu temple scheme. I do not think we can go into the question of the backward classes, who would be admitted to the Hindu temples.

Sardar Mujumdar: What I submit is that there are various minorities even amongst the backward classes. We are not concerned with the question of suitability; we are here to safeguard the interests of all the minorities.

Chairman: Certainly.

Sardar Mujumdar: It was from that point of view that I asked the question.

Chairman: Let me relieve you at once. India is full of minorities, and you have mentioned some of them; but this morning we are considering the body of people called the depressed classes.

Sardar Mujumdar: Very well. Sir.

107. *Syed Miran Muhammad Shah:* You have just said that you want representation in proportion to what the Mohammedans get ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

108. Do you want them because Mohammedans get them ? Do you see any justice in that ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I see justice in that, I do not quite accept the principle of representation of minorities according to population of the legislature as though it was a museum in which we have only to keep so many specimens of so many communities. A Legislative Council is more than a museum, it is a place where, for instance, social battles have to be fought, privileges have to be destroyed, and rights have to be won. Now, if that is the conception of a Legislative Council, I do not think it at all in the fitness of things to confine the minority to proportional representation according to population, that means you are condemning a minority to be perpetually a minority without the power necessary to influence the actions in the majority.

109. Would you be satisfied if the franchise was reduced to local boards in the rural areas ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Well, I would really insist upon adult suffrage. The lower the franchise the better, on that principle I would accept any lowering. but I certainly would not say I would be content with that.

110. Would you then extend adult suffrage to the aboriginal tribes and to the criminal and hill tribes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, I think so.

111. You would?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

112. Or would you like to exclude them and give them nomination and yourselves adult suffrage ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I will say one thing. With regard to the criminal tribes, it might not be a good thing to give them adult suffrage, because by occupation they are a people who have more the interest of their own particular community in their mind, and they are not very particular as regards the means whereby they earn their living; but I do not think there is any harm in giving aborigines the right to vote.

113. They should be given the right to vote, or should their interests be protected by nomination ?

Dr. Ambedkar: They should be protected somehow; I do not much mind

how. My feeling is that every man is intelligent enough to understand exactly what he wants. Literacy has not much bearing on this point; a man may be illiterate, none the less he may be very intelligent.

114. Do not you think that this separate representation will lead to communal tension ? It is stated that communal tension is due to separate representation and separate electorates. Is that your belief ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Even assuming it does lead to tension I do not see how you can get rid of it. Whether it does lead to tension is questionable, but I do not see in any case how you can get rid of it, having regard to the fact that society is divided into classes and communities. 115. Do not you think it is the root cause of dissension ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I do not think so, but I do say this; as a result of communal representation, the leaders of the communities are less prone to compromise than they would otherwise be. That is my feeling, but I do not think it leads to communal riots, which are due, I think, to something very different.

116. *Syed Miran Muhammad Shah:* Would you not suggest that by taking away the official bloc, non-officials may be nominated in order ?

Dr. Ambedkar : I do not want nomination.

117. *Major Afflee:* Are there members of the depressed classes working in industry, in the cotton mills and so on ?

Dr. Ambedkar: All of them. The depressed class men are all labourers.

118. You have not got my point; I am talking of industry. You have members of the depressed classes who work in villages, for the most part in certain occupations. But are there large numbers of the depressed classes engaged in industry ?

Dr. Ambedkar : A very large number.

119. You would have a very large number in a place like Bombay City ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

120. Do they cease in any degree to be untouchable ?

Dr. Ambedkar: No, I should like to point out this. The depressed class man is entirely kept out of the weaving department, the most paying department. He can only enter departments like the throstle department and others.

121. Why?

Dr. Ambedkar: On account of untouchability.

122. When he is working there he is working alongside people of all castes ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Not quite. The departments are discriminated according to castes. One department is entirely manned by the depressed classes; another—say the weaving department—by Mohammedans and caste

Hindus.

123. Do they take part in the trade unions ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, they are beginning to do so.

124. With members of the classes above the depressed classes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

125. I wanted to get this point from you. You put forward a claim for representation of the depressed classes on the basis of numbers. Now, we have claims put forward on a different basis altogether; on, say, the labour basis. You get a cross-division in that way, because a man can be a depressed class man and he can also be a labourer ?

Dr. Ambedkar : He is usually, if not always, a labourer.

126. That is rather a play on words, is not it? I am speaking of capital and labour, of labour in big industries, not of the ordinary un-organised labour. I am speaking of organised labour. How are you going to get over the difficulty ? If you are going to have representation by social status in one case and by industry in another, you are going to get a cross division. How will you get over that ?

Dr. Ambedkar: There will be some provision for organised labour, and the majority of the depressed classes are labourers.

127. *Mr. Hartshorn :* I think. Dr. Ambedkar, you have made it pretty clear that you are in favour of adult suffrage. You say on page 41 of your memorandum, however, " The Sabha would, however, be content if the franchise for the Legislative Council is fixed at the same level as that for the Taluka Local Board in the rural parts and Rs. 3 rental per month in the urban parts of the Presidency." Have you formed any opinion, or are any statistics available to enable us to know to what extent the franchise would be extended on that qualification ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I may tell you that I am myself shaky about that statement. I do not mind admitting that. Such information as I have been able to gather from the depressed classes in the mofussils, however, leads me to believe that the existing taluka local franchise does produce a certain number of voters from the depressed classes.

128. I was not quite thinking of that. Could you tell us the increase in the number of persons who would become voters in the Bombay Presidency if this qualification rather than the present one were adopted ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I do not think I can give you any very definite information on this point.

129. May I revert to a question put to you by Major Attlee ? I gather the depressed classes work in the factories in isolation ?

Dr. Ambedkar : In isolation, yes.

130. They have their own shed and their own department ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Their own department; there are no sheds.

131. Whatever it is, they are separated from the other workers in the factory ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I would rather put it in this way, that certain departments are exclusively assigned to the depressed classes and certain departments are departments into which they are not allowed to enter.

132. Certain kinds of occupations are forbidden to them ?

Dr. Ambedkar: In the mills, yes.

133. I think you said they are not allowed to go into the weaving department ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

134. If they became members of the same trade union, would the workers in the weaving department decline to allow them in ?

Dr. Ambedkar: They would decline to allow them in. If I may mention one thing, in the recent Bombay strike this matter was brought up prominently by me. I said to the members of the union that if they did not recognise the right of the depressed classes to work all the departments, I would rather dissuade the depressed classes from taking part in the strike. They afterwards consented, most reluctantly, to include this as one of their demands, and when they presented this to the millowners, the millowners very rightly snubbed them and said that if this was an injustice, they certainly were not responsible for it.

135. It is not altogether merely a case of the employers wanting to get cheap labour and confining certain departments to the depressed classes for economic reasons ?

Dr. Ambedkar : No, it is untouchability.

136. Would there be anything of this in the situation ? The better-paid Indian, say, declines to allow the untouchable to come into his department for fear that the effect of their lower wages would be to depress wages in his department ?

Dr. Ambedkar: No. There is no distinction on the basis of wages.

137. That does not come into it at all ?

Dr. Ambedkar : No, not at all.

138. It is merely a question of untouchability ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Quite so.

139. *Mr. Cadogan:* They can be members of the trade union ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

140. *Mr. Premchand:* Can you give me a strict definition of the classes who will be on a special register of the electorate as the depressed classes?

Dr. Ambedkar: Castes which cause pollution. 141. Is the principle that the lower the standing of a community the greater the electoral advantage it should command over others, justifiable?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes. 142. If all minorities are granted additional seats, what then will constitute the majority ?

Dr. Ambedkar: If minorities put together make up a majority there is no majority and the question does not arise. There may be class distinctions among the minorities. I can quite conceive the Mohammedans in the Bombay Presidency being divided into two groups, one favouring the capitalists and one the labourers.

143. Is not it true that people who are not politically minded or trained are frequently led astray by professional leaders ?

Dr. Ambedkar : I do not know. I have never been a professional leader, so I cannot say.

144. Would not the extension of the franchise to the large majority of the uneducated section of society be fraught with danger and render it liable to abuse ?

Dr. Ambedkar: No, I do not think so.

145. Can you tell me why it is not possible to admit members of the depressed classes to our present schools and colleges without the necessity for a charge on the revenue of the Province ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Because they are hopelessly neglected under the present system.

146. Why is not it possible to admit members of the depressed classes to our present schools and colleges without the necessity for a charge on the revenues of the Province ?

Dr. Ambedkar : You should ask those who refuse what their reason for refusal is.

147. Refusal of what ?

Dr. Ambedkar : To admit them.

148. To the colleges and schools ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

149. Do you know the Bombay Municipality has passed a rule now ?

Dr. Ambedkar: And you know also of the protest meeting which was held in Bombay.

150. There may have been a protest by one section, but the Municipality has removed all those restrictions ?

Dr. Ambedkar : It remains to be seen how far they will stick to it at the next election.

151. But they have done it, you know ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

152. *Chairman:* Might we know what is the protest meeting to which he refers?

Dr. Ambedkar: The position is this. Hitherto the Bombay Municipality has had separate schools for the depressed classes in the City of Bombay. Now, under the scheme of compulsory primary education, the Bombay Municipality is compelled to limit the number of schools and bring together the scattered children of the depressed classes into the schools of the caste Hindus as a measure of economy. Naturally, some provision has to be made for water and other amenities for the children who attend. The question arose whether there should be a distinction in the drinking arrangements, whether the untouchables should have separate pots for drinking from the caste Hindus. The Municipality passed a resolution saying " We cannot recognise untouchability in our own schools," and they issued a circular that there should be no distinction as to drinking pots in their schools. This protest meeting was a meeting held under the presidency of an important Hindu leader of Bombay to protest against that kind of uniform arrangement being made, as being against the Hindu religion.

153. *Mr. Premchand:* Do you know the depressed classes are employed in the weaving departments of the Ahmedabad mills ?

Dr. Ambedkar : I did not know that.

154. I can tell you they are.

Dr. Ambedkar: There again I should like to say one thing, probably they are employed exclusively. I can quite conceive of a situation where, for instance, so many looms are exclusively handed over to the depressed classes. Today there is a proposal also in certain mills that the depressed classes should take charge of the whole of the weaving department, that the mill owners should hand it over to them, but you cannot have part depressed classes and part caste Hindus.

155. *Chairman:* The difficulty is the mixture ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

156. *Sir Hari Singh Gour:* What is the view of your Institute in regard to the general scheme of constitutional reform ? Have you formulated any views at all on the subject ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I may tell you this. The depressed classes as such, of course, are not very much interested in constitutional questions; they are more interested in obtaining the guarantees and protection they require, under whatever form of Government that may come to be. Therefore, I do not think that the depressed classes as such have any definite views as to

the form of Provincial Government or the form of the Central Government; but, of course, I have my own individual views as a member of the depressed classes, without these being the views of the depressed classes themselves. It is on that account that nothing is said about the constitution in my memorandum.

157. I am aware of that, and that is why I asked you that question. What are your personal views ?

Dr. Ambedkar : So far as the Provincial Government is concerned, I am in favour of Provincial autonomy. 158. Qualified or unqualified ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I think there might be some safeguards with regard to the transfer of law and order. It is not that I object to the transfer of law and order; I am in favour of the transfer; but still I should like some safeguard. I am not certain today what it should be, but there might be with advantage some safeguard in that respect. Barring that, I am in favour (speaking personally) of full Provincial autonomy.

159. What about the Central Government ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I think we might start with dyarchy there.

160. As regards adult suffrage, I suppose you are in favour of adult male and female suffrage ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

161. Do you think that is a practical proposition ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Very practical.

162. Do you think the masses have attained any degree of political consciousness, so as to be able to use that political suffrage with any advantage to their own community ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Speaking only on behalf of the depressed classes. I emphatically maintain that the depressed classes will exercise their vote in a most intelligent manner, speaking for the Bombay Presidency. Having regard to the fact that the canker of untouchability is before their minds every minute of their lives, and having regard to their being alive to the fact that political power is the only solvent of this difficulty, I emphatically maintain that the depressed class voter would be an intelligent voter.

163. Do not you think that, following the example of other countries, those who pay no taxes, having a political existence and possessing political power, will tax those who are already oppressed with heavy taxes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I think that should be so. I do not see anything wrong in it.

164. You see no wrong in the exploitation of the tax paying community ? Is this your own opinion or the opinion of the Institute which you represent ?

Dr. Ambedkar: My own opinion. The Institute has said nothing about it here.

165. Do you think you reflect the general opinion of your Institute in conveying this view to the Commission ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I think that would be the view of all poor communities.

167. *Sir Hari Singh Gour:* In answer to the Chairman, you said the depressed classes must be regarded as a distinct community, a community distinct from the Hindu community. Do you apply that only for electoral purposes, or for all purposes ?

Dr. Ambedkar : They are distinct for all purposes, as a matter of fact. 168. Would you class the depressed classes as real Hindus ?

Dr. Ambedkar : I do not care about the nomenclature. It does not matter whether I call myself a Hindu or a non-Hindu, as long as I am outside the pale of the Hindu community.

170. It makes all the difference in the world. If you were outside the pale of Hinduism you would not be subject to Hindu law. You could not, for instance, contract a marriage under the Act 30 of 1923, which has completely abolished all castes so far as the marriage law is concerned between a Hindu and a Mahar, touchable and untouchable. Now, if you go out of that community, out of that social system, and call yourself a non-Hindu, you will be outside the pale of Hindu law to that extent ?

Dr. Ambedkar : It might be.

171. Then by what law would you be governed?

Dr. Ambedkar: We are governed by the Hindu law, just as, for instance, the Khojas, who are Mohammedans, prefer to be governed by Hindu law so far as the devolution of property is concerned.

172. And you are under the Act 30 of 1923 ; you are under Hindu law ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I do not know what the depressed classes would think about marriage.

173. Would you kindly turn to your memorandum ? You say at page 39, and you also repeated it today in answer to my friend Mr. Kikabhai, " the standing of the community must mean its power to protect itself in the social struggle. That power would obviously depend upon the educational and economic status of the community."

Dr. Ambedkar: Quite.

174. It follows from the recognition of the principle that the lower the standing of a community, the greater electoral advantage it must get over the rest. Do you adduce this last sentence as a logical deduction from the premises, from the previous two sentences ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

175. You regard that as a logical deduction ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes, quite.

176. I wish to draw your attention to the fact that you say : " In addition to the demand for adequate representation, the Sabha feels that it must also demand the inclusion of clauses in the constitution of the country." Now, amongst these clauses you find things like this mentioned: " the right of every depressed class to the appointment of a special inspector of police from amongst themselves " ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

177. Do you expect that an Act of Parliament should contain a clause to this effect, that the depressed classes in India shall have an inspector of police in every district from amongst themselves ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I really do not see anything strange in that.

178. Supposing there was a provision to that effect relating to all communities (because if you have got certain constitutional guarantees it follows by necessary implication that other communities have an equal right), then you parcel out all the official posts and you parcel out all the other things amongst the various communities, and that is the constitution that you foresee for India ?

Dr. Ambedkar : I do not know that. I am only speaking for the depressed classes. May I just make one thing clear ?

179. May I just complete my sentence ? That is a contingency that does not arouse any apprehension in your mind ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Just let me explain before you go further. I think we must be very careful in using the word " minority ". I do not think simply because a community happens to be a community composed of small numbers it is therefore necessarily a minority for political purposes.

A minority which is oppressed, or whose rights are denied or the majority, would be a minority that would be fit for consideration for political purposes.

180. Wherever you have these minorities in other countries, there is provision made, there is sometimes a minister for the protection of minorities. Have you thought about that ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

181. Supposing we gave you the protection—the protection might be given in any form, and if I may say so ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I am sorry to interrupt you—I do find that the new constitutions that have been framed after the peace for the various European countries composing the bulk of the Slavonic nations very largely embody this principle. I have devoted some special attention to this subject, if you will permit me to say so.

182. *Lord Burnham*: And carried out ?

Dr. Ambedkar: And made part of the Constitution.

183. And carried out in practice too ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Carried out in practice; and the point is this, that if a minority feels that the guarantee has not been fulfilled, it has the right of appeal to the League of Nations.

186. I am not quarrelling with the principle ?

Dr. Ambedkar : And I may say T am not very particular about the form.

187. If the details of the scheme which you have adumbrated were to be introduced into the constitution of this country, would it not lead to a perpetual class war ?

Dr. Ambedkar: It might, but that would depend upon the attitude of the majority.

188. Therefore you would not, as a sagacious statesman ?

Dr. Ambedkar: If you will permit me to say so, all these things, though T insist upon them, I admit to be provisions of a transitory character. T do contemplate and I do desire, the time when India shall be one; and T believe that a time will come when, for instance, all these things will not be necessary; but all that would depend upon the attitude of the majority towards the minority.

198. Now, you mentioned a case that you conducted on behalf of a member of the depressed class, who, from fear of social ostracism, stood outside near the window. What district was it?

Dr. Ambedkar: Khandesh district.

199. Ordinary Magistrate's Court ?

Dr. Ambedkar: The stipendiary Magistrate's Court.

200. What caste was the Magistrate ?

Dr. Ambedkar: A Hindu.

201. He did not object to the accused coming into the court ?

Dr. Ambedkar : No. I say the accused himself would not come in.

202. The accused himself was terrorised by the past acts of the Hindus ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

203. The fear had been engendered in the minds of the depressed classes on account of the oppression of the caste Hindus that he would not get a square deal thereafter if he was to trench upon the limited rights which he had been given by the caste Hindus ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

204. *Sir Hari Singh Gour*: I think you will admit. *Dr. Ambedkar*, that during

the last few years there has been a forward movement in the way of removing untouchability and removing all disqualifications from the path of the depressed classes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

205. I admit that the reforms have not been commensurate with your desires and mind, but at the same time, we have to recognise that there is a growing feeling that there must be a consolidation of the Hindu people by removing all these barriers that stand between the caste and the non-caste Hindus. You recognise that ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, there are speeches from the platform.

206. There are positive actions ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Speaking for my part of the country, the Bombay Presidency, I would rather hesitate to accept your proposition.

207. Therefore, I will give you examples. Every year, for instance, wherever there is a caste and no-caste society, Hindus hold annual dinners, and they all sit together for the purpose of making one class of people accustomed to the other class of people ?

Dr. Ambedkar : I am not aware of it in this Presidency.

208. I have attended several of them.

Dr. Ambedkar : In this Presidency ?

Sir Hari Singh Gour : No, in Nagpur.

209. There is no such movement here ?

Dr. Ambedkar: No.

210. But you admit that there is recognition of the fact that oppression and untouchability must go, and that every effort to suggest anything in that way receives sympathetic consideration from the caste Hindus, and particularly from the Reformers ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I would hesitate, again, to answer that.

Chairman: Would you agree, in order to get this witness's view of the facts, that I should ask two or three questions on your line ?

Sir Hari Singh Gour: Yes Sir, certainly.

211. *Chairman:* Mr. Rajah would be, in many ways, the best person to do it, but I wish you would tell us your own view. Compare twenty years ago with now in the Bombay Presidency. How many years, if I may ask, have you been here?

Dr. Ambedkar : Five or six years.

212. You have, of course, taken an interest in your own community since long before that? *Dr. Ambedkar:* Yes.

213. You can look back twenty years and give us some ideal ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

214. Let me take two or three things. First of all I imagine that there is no change at all so far as regards the admission of the depressed classes to the interior of a Hindu temple. That, of course, is a matter of religious practice and teaching. I do not criticise it, but there is no change at all ?

Dr. Ambedkar : No, there is no change at all in that respect.

215. What I want to know is this. Let us take two or three definite things in this Presidency. In the country districts, you have told us that as a rule the depressed classes, the untouchables, live in a place for themselves. Of course, we have seen it many times. Sometimes they live in a corner of the village, if it happens to be a Hindu village, and sometimes in a hamlet of their own. Now is there any change in the last twenty years as regards their living among the general communities ?

Dr. Ambedkar : No change.

216. We saw some of the villages the other day. We understand some of them can draw water from the river, but I suppose there are other villages that rely on wells ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Even in the case of rivers they can take water only from a portion of the river. A point on the river is appointed for them.

217. That is to say, the depressed classes will draw water at a point lower down than the caste Hindus ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

218. Now let us take the case of villages that rely on wells. It is not uncommon?

Dr. Ambedkar: No, not; uncommon.

219. I am anxious to know and I hope you will tell me quite frankly, is there in that respect any improvement in the last twenty years ?

Dr. Ambedkar: No.

220. Your attention has been called to the fact that there have been resolutions passed on this subject ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes, only resolutions.

221. It is suggested that untouchability sometimes goes to such a length that the actual contact with the man (or sometimes his shadow itself) is regarded socially by those of the higher castes as a pollution ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

222. Is there an improvement in that respect ?

Dr. Ambedkar: There is an improvement in that respect.

223. I am glad to hear that. That is, whereas 20 years ago a caste Hindu who found himself in close contact with an untouchable would possibly think it his religious duty to purify himself, it is not viewed with so much strictness now ; is that correct ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

224. Then, of course, as compared with twenty years ago I imagine that there are some members of the depressed classes who have in fact risen very much in the professional scale. Twenty years ago were there depressed classes who were practising at the Bar in Bombay ?

Dr. Ambedkar: No.

225. How many members of the depressed classes practise at the Bar now ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I am the only man.

226. I think we were told yesterday that in the list of voters for the Sardars and Inamdars there were two members of the depressed classes ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Only one. His position is different. His jagir was granted by the Peshwas for the services rendered on the battlefield. His title was not given by the British Government.

227. What one notices is that in India there is gradually being introduced the motor bus connecting the town with the village and I see them going along the road. Are those public vehicles open to the depressed classes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Not in villages. There are a great many villages where the depressed classes are not allowed to travel in these buses.

228. Who prevents them ?

Dr. Ambedkar : The driver would not take them.

229. One would expect the driver to take anybody who pays. Why does he not take them ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Because if he takes them the other people will not come into his car. For instance, the barber here would not shave my head even though I offer him a rupee.

230. *Rao Saheb Patil:* According to law the driver would be prosecuted if he refuses to take any passenger ?

Dr. Ambedkar: That can be evaded by saying that all seats are booked.

231. Are matters improving in that respect ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, they are improving; but still there are numerous cases where the depressed classes would not be allowed to enter into these buses.

232. Let us take the depressed classes who are employed in the mills in Bombay. Some of them go in trams, I suppose. Do you suggest that they are not allowed to use the trams ?

Dr. Ambedkar: There was a case two years ago where a Bhungi was not allowed to board a tram.

233. When you speak of the case two years ago it suggests to me that it is rather exceptional than a rule ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I have seen, for instance, when I was travelling by the B.B. & C.I. Railway hundreds of cases where the passengers obstructed the depressed classes coming into the compartments.

234. *Sir Hari Singh Gour:* With regard to the case of the Bhungi which you mentioned, are you sure if he was not properly attired and therefore he was not allowed to get into the tram ? *Dr. Ambedkar:* I do not know about that.

235. Before a man gets into the tram he is not asked to which caste he belongs ; they only ask him whether he has got the fare, is it not ?

Dr. Ambedkar : But people can easily recognise him.

236. That is on account of his dress ?

Dr. Ambedkar: But he will be dealt with very badly when once he is recognised to belong to the depressed classes.

237. Apart from the question of caste there is also the question of costume?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, but some of the members of the depressed class are very well dressed.

238. In the Bombay Presidency you have no such thing as to consider it a pollution to walk in the shadow of a depressed class member ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, it exists in some parts of the Konkan and in Kathiawad.

239. It is on the wane ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

240. With regard to the Ambalal Sarlal School in Ahmedabad, has not his sister started the school for depressed classes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: That is the only honourable exception.

241. Is not the school maintained for the depressed classes from public funds?

Dr. Ambedkar: I do not know that, but I know that that lady is taking interest in the elevation of the depressed classes.

242. *Chairman:* I understand it is an exceptional case ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, it is quite an exceptional case.

243. *Dr. Suhrawardy:* In view of the instances of social ostracism and tyranny which you have just stated, do you not think that in a general election members of your community will be frightened out of the polling booths ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes, it may happen.

244. Also there is the further apprehension that the high caste-Hindus may refuse to come and participate in the elections where the untouchables go to record their votes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: They might; it is very difficult to say what might happen.

We have cases, for instance, where the caste-Hindu members of district boards have left the premises because the depressed class members have claimed to sit at the table.

245. Do you not think that, in view of this state of affairs, it will be better for you to have a separate electorate because in practice it will mean a separate electorate even if you reserve your seats in a general electorates ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

246. *Rao Bahadur Rajah:* With reference to the question put by my friend, Sir Hari Singh Gour, regarding the costume of the depressed classes, did the barber refuse to shave your head because you were not well dressed ?

Dr. Ambedkar: No ; it is because I belong to the depressed class.

247. Not on account of the dress you were wearing ?

Dr. Ambedkar: No.

248. With regard to another question put by another member of the Committee, may I ask you whether it is easy for a depressed class member in a village to file a suit against the owner of a bus because he has refused to take him ?

Dr. Ambedkar : It is not possible.

249. I understand that you have been taking very much interest in the uplift of the depressed classes. What has been your experience during your propaganda as to the help you receive in this work from the higher classes ? Do they help you to impress upon the depressed classes the need for greater sanitation, hygiene and such like things ?

Dr. Ambedkar: My experience, unfortunately, is rather very bitter in this matter. The depressed classes have been dubbed to be unfit for association because of certain unclean habits. That is the allegation of the upper classes. That is to say, they eat the meat of the dead animals and they are not clean, and so on. In this Presidency during the last two years I started a campaign to purify the depressed classes, so to say, and to persuade them to give up some of their dirty habits. But, to my great misfortune, I found the whole caste-Hindu population up against me when in a matter like this I expected the utmost co-operation from them. But when I began to analyse the basis of their opposition I found that they insisted upon the depressed class people doing the unclean things because giving up doing these things meant that the depressed classes were exceeding their social status and rivalling the upper class. For instance, in the Colaba and Ratnagiri districts the whole of the Mahar population have given up the eating of the meat of dead animals, but the tyranny and social oppression that is going on against them is simply unspeakable; there is a complete economic and social boycott. The lands they had been cultivating for years past have been taken

away from them by their caste-Hindu landlords. Every sort of pressure, social and economic, has been brought to bear upon the depressed classes in order to compel them to resume their dirty habits. The officials, who are all caste-Hindus, give no protection to the depressed classes, whose condition has really become pitiable, and all this because they sought to give up their dirty habits. Instead of getting co-operation I find that the members of the upper classes are up against me, and they say " these evil habits of the depressed classes are all insignia of their inferiority and they must remain."

250. The other day we heard a witness say that there is not a single depressed class member on the sanitary boards. If what you have said just now with regard to the higher castes is true, is there any good in the depressed class members, being on these boards so far as their sanitary improvement is concerned ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I think the depressed class people ought to be represented on every local authority.

251. You told us just now that in the courts in this Presidency witnesses belonging to the depressed classes have no access. I want to be clear on that point. Do you mean to say that the members of the depressed class are not admitted into some of the courts ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

252. And I understand you to say that in a case the man did not dare go into the court, is that so ?

Dr. Ambedkar: The thing is the depressed class man is looked upon by the caste people as having a particular station in life, he exceeds that station in life when he enters the court, and if he exceeded that station in life they would begin to harass him. The man, if he exceeded the social limits, would subsequently suffer at the hands of the caste people. My protection in that particular case was only temporary protection and he knew it would cease as soon as the case was over.

253. If you had not been there and if he attempted to go into the court, what would have happened to him ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I think the same thing would have happened to me when I tried to enter a temple in Bombay.

254. Coming to medical relief, will you kindly enlighten us as to the kind of medical relief the depressed class men are getting ?

Dr. Ambedkar: They are not allowed entry into the dispensary, unless the case is a very very serious one; such as, for instance, the non-admission would bring the officer's conduct to the notice of the higher authorities. Ordinarily the medicine is dispensed out.

255. *Chairman:* I suppose you are talking of dispensaries in the mofussil ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, Government dispensaries.

256. They are, of course, in the department of the Minister of Medical Administration ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

257. I imagine that the regulations of the Minister provide that these dispensaries are open to everybody who goes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

258. But you say that in the mofussil in fact it does not work out like that?

Dr. Ambedkar: No.

Dr. Solanki: The Hindu medical man who is orthodox always takes objection to examine a man belonging to the depressed classes. There have been instances in Gujarat where the men have actually died from the want of medical relief. I know of instances where doctors have actually refused even to touch the patient when he was suffering from pneumonia. The doctor would hand over the thermometer to a Mohammedan who does not know how to hold the thermometer and the Mohammedan would hand over the thermometer to the patient. This is a fact and it has happened.

259. What is important, I think, as I said before and I may repeat it, is to get a true picture. The thing may happen occasionally. I want to know whether what you are describing is quite an exceptional thing due to some particular doctor's objection or whether you think it is an everyday happening ?

Dr. Solanki: Doctors who are orthodox do it.

260. The difficulty about this thing is that the objection that is taken by the medical man is an objection based on his own religious views ?

Dr. Solanki: Yes.

261. *Rao Bahadur Rajah:* Have these facts been brought to the notice of the authorities concerned ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

262. What was the action they took ?

Dr. Ambedkar: The reply the Minister gave was that we had better depend on persuasion; that was the word he used.

Chairman: Would you do this for us, Rao Bahadur ? One hears of different aspects of this and I want to know the facts. What is the position about the depressed class children in the ordinary public schools in this province ? Would you ask the witness about that for me ?

263. *Rao Bahadur Rajah:* Will you kindly enlighten us as to the attitude of the schoolmasters or the Education Department or the managers of schools towards the children of the depressed classes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: There is a circular issued by Dr. Paranjpye when he was Minister of Education in this Presidency to the effect that children of depressed classes should be admitted in all schools. But our experience is that circular has not been carried out at all. It is true that in the report of the Director of Public Instruction it is stated that that circular has been carried into effect; but I beg to differ from that view. It is not a correct statement of facts as they exist today. There is an incident here at Poona which took place only a few days ago, at Deoo, where the children of the depressed classes were refused admission and when they insisted on it the village proclaimed social boycott against the depressed classes.

264. *Chairman :* The memorandum refers to that report ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, that is not a correct statement of facts as I said. I beg to differ from that.

265. *Rao Bahadur Rajah:* I understood from Mr. Griffith that in his view there are reasons why the depressed classes could not be taken into the police department as the duties of the police involved house searches and arrests. Supposing, for the sake of argument, that is true, would there be similar objection to the recruitment of the depressed class members to other subordinate and provincial services ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Find that there are so many objections raised.

266. You are a member of the Local Legislative Council ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

267. What is your experience as regards the attitude of the higher caste members of the local Council towards your community ?

Dr. Ambedkar : One cannot say it is favourable to the depressed classes.

268. What is the attitude of the Government towards the members of your community in your Provinces ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Very apathetic.

269. I suppose you have got honorary bench magistrates' courts in this Presidency. Are there any members of the depressed classes on these boards?

Dr. Ambedkar: There are none and we are trying to get some on the bench of magistrates, but without effect. Perhaps it might be interesting to the Conference if I read in this connection a letter written by the Collector of the Khandesh district to a member of the depressed classes when he applied for an appointment on the bench. This letter also gives the reasons why he should not be appointed to the place, and it reads thus :

"The Collector has every sympathy with the aspirations of the depressed classes and is glad to recognise and appreciate Mr. Medhe's good work in the various fields of public activities ; but in his opinion time has not yet

come when a member of the depressed classes can be given a seat on the bench of magistrates, and, until the Government makes some pronouncement favourable to the aspiration of the depressed classes in this Presidency he must regretfully express his inability to recommend such an appointment." This letter is dated 25th September 1928.

270. I am sure you will agree with me that appointments to these bodies have nothing to do with the progress of the communities ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Nothing.

271. The sole consideration should be whether the individual candidate can discharge his duties with a sense of responsibility ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

272. *Lord Burnham:* I understood you to say that of all the methods to protect the interests of the depressed classes, you preferred the universal suffrage ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I would rather say adequate representation in the Legislative Council.

273. I understand you to say you were in favour of universal suffrage ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

274. If you have not got that you go in for separate electorates ? Supposing you cannot get either, are you still in favour of the principle of nomination ?

Dr. Ambedkar : No. I would insist on our representative being elected.

275. If you cannot get the election on the terms proposed, you would prefer adult franchise?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

276. *Chairman:* You have spoken of your strong preference for the representation of the depressed classes being secured by the method of election. Are you satisfied, supposing the method was the method of election, that the result would be that you will get elected those who were really the best spokesmen for the depressed classes ?

Dr. Ambedkar : I believe so.

277. You do not feel anxious that influences which were really against the interests of the depressed classes will get to work ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I admit that and that is why I want adult suffrage.

278. You think that the influence will cease because of the adult suffrage ?

Dr. Ambedkar : That will be counterbalanced.

279. Supposing that a member of the depressed classes has the necessary qualification, does he vote in a general constituency ?

Dr. Ambedkar: He does.

280. Taking your case you will have a qualification to vote in some general

constituency ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes; I vote for the University constituency as also my friend.

281. How does the position stand about the paying of taxes ? A suggestion was made that depressed classes do not pay the taxes. Of course, it follows that, as regards the Customs duties and other indirect taxes which may raise the price of the articles, I suppose the depressed classes will have to pay the increased price like anybody else ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes. Also the depressed class men, particularly the Mahar community, is always in possession of some land of ordinary tenure or watan tenure at any rate, and they pay what is called the judi, that is the assessment, as anybody else.

282. I suppose that a good many Mahars follow the occupation of waiters in private service ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, very few. But they mainly work in industries in the cities.

283. Take, for instance, a European private house or a club, they employ Mahars ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes.

284. Are those people qualified to vote in a general constituency or not?

Dr. Ambedkar: That will depend on the pitch of franchise.

285. As a rule the waiters would not have any qualification ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes, under the existing circumstances.

286. *Sardar Majumdar:* Are you aware that saints from the depressed classes are revered by all classes, and high-class persons bow down before them as much as before such saints from higher classes ?

Dr. Ambedkar : There is only one case so far as I know.

287. But do they do so ?

Dr. Ambedkar : Yes, as they do the Mohammedan Pir.

288. Are you aware that untouchability is not observed in the Warkari Panth, i.e. the devotees of the God Vithoba at Pandharpur ?

Dr. Ambedkar: That is entirely incorrect

289. Do you agree that there is a vast change during the last 25 years in the treatment accorded to the depressed classes, that the educated higher classes are trying to remove this evil of untouchability and mix with them quite freely and that there is a gradual change in the condition of the depressed classes and in the treatment accorded to them by the general educated public ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, it is so, though the sympathy is only in words and is seldom translated into action.

290. Are you aware that in almost all villages the depressed class people are provided with wells meant only for their own use ?

Dr. Ambedkar: No.

291. Are there not such wells ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Not in every village.

292. Who are the depressed classes ? Will you please name the castes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: There is the census.

293. Do inter-marriages take place between the Mang and the Mahar castes?

Dr. Ambedkar : No, the caste Hindus have spread their poison to the rest.

294. Do they dine together ?

Dr. Ambedkar: Yes, now-a-days. The movement for consolidation is going on and there is now a case of inter-marriage between a Mang and a Mahar.

295. Are there not two Inamdars in my constituency who belong to the depressed classes ?

Dr. Ambedkar: I do not know.

[Contents](#)

[Statement "E"](#)